

Character Development in Action, K–12

Successful Practices in Ontario Schools



Le développement du caractère en action,
de la maternelle à la 12^e année
Pratiques réussies dans les écoles de l'Ontario

What Is Character Development?

Character development is the deliberate effort to nurture the universal attributes upon which schools and communities find consensus. These attributes provide a standard for behaviour against which we hold ourselves accountable. They permeate all that happens in schools. They bind us together across the lines that often divide us in society. They form the basis of our relationships and of responsible citizenship. They are a foundation for excellence and equity in education, and for our vision of learning cultures and school communities that are respectful, safe, caring and inclusive.

Excellence in education includes character development. Through character, we find common ground.

Qu'est-ce que le développement du caractère?

Le développement du caractère est un effort concerté pour transmettre des attributs universels acceptés par les écoles et l'ensemble de la communauté. Ces attributs établissent une norme de comportement qui nous responsabilise les uns envers les autres. Ils sont omniprésents dans les écoles et transcendent les facteurs qui divisent souvent notre société. Ils établissent la base de nos relations, d'une citoyenneté responsable, de l'excellence et de l'équité en éducation et de communautés respectueuses, bienveillantes et inclusives.

L'excellence en éducation inclut le développement du caractère qui, à son tour, nous permet de trouver des points communs.

The artwork on the cover of this document was produced in 2007 by Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board students from Dale Road Senior Public School. The Friendship Fence was their submission for the Board's Annual Equity and Diversity Gala. Each year, the KPRDSB's Equity and Diversity Committee invites students to create media that comments on equity and diversity issues. The submissions are unveiled during a celebration at the gala, which is attended by students, parents, educators and community members, to honour the artists' creativity and to reflect on themes related to equity.

L'œuvre d'art qui figure sur la couverture de ce document a été créée en 2007 par les élèves de l'école Dale Road Senior Public School, qui fait partie du Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board. The Friendship Fence (La clôture de l'amitié) est l'œuvre qu'ils ont présentée lors du gala annuel du conseil sur l'équité et la diversité. Chaque année, le comité sur l'équité et la diversité du KPRDSB invite les élèves à créer des œuvres qui reflètent les enjeux liés à l'équité et à la diversité. Toutes les créations reçues sont dévoilées dans le cadre d'un gala auquel participent les élèves, les parents, les éducateurs ainsi que les membres de la communauté pour rendre hommage à la créativité des artistes et se pencher sur les thèmes touchant à l'équité.

Successful Practices: Moving Forward

Pratiques réussies : Aller de l'avant

This document is a compilation of successful practices used in the implementation of the Character Development Initiative, submitted by boards from across the province of Ontario.

We trust you will find this document useful as you implement your character development plans and that the practices described in it validate your current work; give you an opportunity to examine the scope, depth and breadth of your work; and suggest new avenues for further development.

Future editions will address emergent needs, and we will be asking you to identify additional successful practices in your classrooms, schools and boards, and in your collaborations with parents and community members.

We would like to thank the many contributors to the document. All submissions represented a distinct facet of character development, yet there were more than we are able to profile here. Those that are most likely to guide current needs have been chosen for this first edition.

We look forward to publishing a series of documents that will stand as a testament to our province's commitment to an education system that values character development through learning and academic achievement, respect for diversity, citizenship development, and parent and community engagement. *Character Development in Action, K-12* is a portrait of education in Ontario that values the student as a whole person and the voices of the entire education community.

Ce document présente une compilation des pratiques réussies utilisées dans le cadre de la mise en œuvre de l'Initiative de développement du caractère ainsi que des pratiques de développement du caractère recensées partout dans la province d'Ontario.

Nous sommes convaincus que vous trouverez ce document utile à la mise en œuvre de vos propres pratiques de développement du caractère et qu'il vous permettra de valider votre travail, d'examiner la portée, la profondeur et l'ampleur de vos réalisations et vous fournira de nouvelles pistes de développement.

Les prochaines éditions traiteront aussi des besoins émergents, et nous vous demanderons à nouveau d'indiquer les pratiques réussies dans vos classes, vos écoles, vos conseils et dans le cadre de vos collaborations avec les parents et la communauté.

Nous désirons remercier les nombreuses personnes qui ont collaboré à la réalisation du présent document. Tous les textes soumis reflétaient un aspect particulier du développement du caractère. Leur nombre était supérieur à ce que nous pouvions publier. Les textes qui étaient les plus susceptibles de répondre aux besoins actuels sont ceux qui ont été choisis pour cette première édition.

Nous entrevoyons la publication d'une série de documents qui témoigneront de l'engagement de notre province en faveur d'un système d'éducation qui valorise la réussite scolaire, le développement du caractère, l'engagement civique et le respect de la diversité. *Le développement du caractère en action de la maternelle à la 12^e année* se veut un portrait de l'éducation en Ontario, qui met l'accent sur le développement intégral de l'élève et la voix de la communauté scolaire.

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Character Development in Action, K–12 Successful Practices in Ontario Schools

Le développement du caractère en action, de la maternelle à la 12^e année Pratiques réussies dans les écoles de l'Ontario

Introduction

The Ontario Ministry of Education recognizes the need for site-based implementation of character development based on the beliefs, principles and expectations in the framework document, *Finding Common Ground: Character Development in Ontario Schools, K–12*.

Board and school implementation of character development initiatives must include results from board consultations with a broad cross-section of its community – consultations that reflect its diversity. Students must be included in this consensus-building process. Character development initiatives will look different given the wide diversity of classrooms, schools, boards and communities across our province. Implementation, guided by the framework document, is contextual.

Finding Common Ground: Character Development in Ontario Schools, K–12 represents the scope and breadth within which character development takes place. *Character Development in Action, K–12: Successful Practices* tells the stories of the activities and strategies that boards and schools have used to express and live their vision of character development.

The impact of these practices validates what research has told us – that character development positively influences all aspects of school life. When we share our practices, we make these benefits available to the many others in our province who share in the broader purposes of education.

Introduction

Le ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario reconnaît la nécessité d'une mise en œuvre locale du développement du caractère en fonction des convictions, des principes et des attentes énoncés dans le document-cadre *Vers des points communs : le développement du caractère dans les écoles de l'Ontario, de la maternelle à la 12^e année*.

La mise en œuvre des initiatives de développement du caractère par les conseils et les écoles doit tenir compte des consultations menées par les conseils auprès de leur communauté reflétant sa diversité. Les élèves doivent participer à ce processus visant à établir un consensus. Par conséquent, les initiatives de développement du caractère varieront en fonction de la grande diversité des classes, des écoles, des conseils et des communautés de la province. La mise en œuvre, orientée par le document-cadre, doit donc être adaptée au contexte.

Le document *Vers des points communs : le développement du caractère dans les écoles de l'Ontario, de la maternelle à la 12^e année* reflète la portée et l'ampleur que devront avoir les activités de développement du caractère. Pour sa part, *Le développement du caractère en action, de la maternelle à la 12^e année* décrit les activités et les stratégies que les conseils et les écoles ont utilisées pour exprimer et mettre en pratique leur vision du développement du caractère.

Les résultats de ces pratiques confirment ce que la recherche nous a indiqué, à savoir, que le développement du caractère a une influence favorable sur tous les aspects de la vie scolaire. Lorsque nous partageons nos pratiques, nous rendons ces avantages accessibles aux nombreuses autres personnes dans notre province qui partagent les objectifs généraux de l'éducation.

How to Use This Document ...

Comment utiliser ce document ...

This document is not a “how to” manual; it is meant to act as an inspiration and as a resource. It is meant to be used creatively for multiple purposes rather than literally. It can be:

1. a **recognition** and **celebration** of successful activities, initiatives, approaches and processes already happening across the province in classrooms, schools and boards
2. a basis for professional learning **inquiry** and **discussion** to better understand the depth, breadth, scope and language of character development
3. a tool for **involving** groups and organizations by providing concrete examples of such involvement
4. a framework for board and school committees for **exploring possible** activities and approaches
5. an opportunity to create a **network of practitioners**
6. an entry point for **dialogue** at community, board and school forums
7. a **model** for putting together board and school collections of successful practices
8. a **database** of practices

The successful practices that follow represent a vision of the potential for character development in Ontario’s schools, boards and communities. They are a picture of the promise of character development, and of its capacity to make a difference in the lives of students and all members of school communities.

Ce document n’est pas un manuel d’instructions, mais il se veut plutôt une inspiration et une ressource. Il a été conçu pour être utilisé de façon créative, à diverses fins, plutôt que de manière littérale. Il peut être :

1. une **reconnaissance** et une **célébration** des activités, des initiatives, des approches et des processus réussis qui ont cours dans les classes, les écoles et les conseils de la province;
2. un fondement pour la **recherche et la discussion** axées sur la collaboration en matière d’apprentissage professionnel visant à mieux comprendre la profondeur, l’ampleur, la portée et la terminologie du développement du caractère;
3. un outil qui favorise la **participation des partenaires** en leur fournissant des exemples concrets de l’engagement de groupes semblables à l’initiative;
4. un cadre qui permet aux comités des conseils et des écoles **d’étudier les activités et les approches possibles**;
5. une occasion de créer un **réseau de leaders** en développement du caractère;
6. un point de départ du **dialogue** lors de forums dans la communauté, au sein du conseil et à l’école;
7. un **modèle** sur la façon de rassembler diverses pratiques réussies des conseils et des écoles;
8. une **base de données** sur les pratiques.

Les pratiques réussies qui suivent reflètent une vision des possibilités liées au développement du caractère dans les écoles, les conseils et les communautés de l’Ontario. Elles donnent un aperçu des perspectives prometteuses du développement du caractère, et de sa capacité à faire une différence dans la vie des élèves et de tous les membres de la communauté scolaire.

School Based: K–12 Successful Practices

Pratiques réussies en milieu scolaire : de la maternelle à la 12^e année

Algoma District School Board

- **Mustang Sally** – Character through performance 6

Conseil scolaire de district catholique des Aurores boréales

- **Arrêtons l'intimidation!** – Prévention de la violence en mettant l'accent sur le respect de tous 7
- **L'activité de l'immeuble** – Activités pour développer un sens d'appartenance culturelle francophone et les habiletés en communication orale 8
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Conseil scolaire catholique Franco-Nord

- **Développer des qualités humaines** – Développer une pensée juste et une sensibilité profonde 10

Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board

- **Character Builders** – Leadership vision and advocacy for building cultures of character 11

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

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Keewatin-Patricia District School Board

- **Deepening Our Understanding** – Connecting Grandfather Teachings to culture and character 13

Ottawa Catholic School Board

- **Project Exile** – Global awareness through experiential learning and partnerships 15

St. Clair Catholic District School Board

- **Creating Belonging**
 - Rhythmic Souls – Inclusion of students with disabilities through dance 16
 - Pedagape Club – Helping others; the inclusion of often excluded students 16

Simcoe County District School Board

- **Character Savers** – Student photographs used as character screen savers 17

York Region District School Board

- **Act III** – Student leadership development conference – student led and delivered 18
- **Integrity Team** – Student engagement and leadership in character culture building across the school 20
- **Restorative Practice** – Restorative practice that uses character to achieve high behavioural expectations across the school 21

Mustang Sally

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Board: *Algoma District School Board*

Focus: *School-Based Secondary*

Background

Mustang Sally is more than an extracurricular musical group. It embodies the true spirit of character development. Using music as their vehicle, student and staff musicians are engaging people of all ages to find common ground. People in the board's schools and in the schools' larger communities have come to expect good music and exemplary character when they attend a Mustang Sally performance. Our student musicians realize the importance of modelling character attributes and take personal as well as professional responsibility for doing so. They have become ambassadors of character development for the Algoma District School Board and are learning a powerful lesson – their active engagement can make a difference in their school, in other schools, and in the wider community.

Korah Collegiate and Vocational School is extremely proud of its 15-piece musical group's performance program and its band. Mustang Sally has been performing publicly for several years and has wowed audiences in more than 400 performances across Ontario. The high energy,

clear vision and unique style of the group combine to energize and motivate audiences of all ages.

What we did

Auditions for the musical group are held over the course of a week during the month of September. Posters and several morning announcements inform students at Korah about the upcoming auditions. Criteria for selection include: the student's commitment and dedication to the group and its vision, other extracurricular involvement, academic achievement, teacher recommendations and musical talent. Auditions for the group consist of an interview and a live performance.

Mustang Sally has also developed the Mustang Sally Character Education Scholarship to be awarded to a graduate who has consistently demonstrated the character attributes valued by our board: leadership, courage, respect, loyalty, and honesty. Recipients must maintain an overall average of 75 per cent in the last year of high school or in their participating year(s) as a Mustang Sally member.

Impact

On student achievement

- *Fosters commitment and courage*
- *Makes it cool to care and to work hard*
- *Develops self-discipline, sacrifice, and responsibility*
- *Develops teamwork and cooperation*
- *Develops the ability to balance extracurricular activities and education*

On school culture

- *Creates pride throughout the school in the talents and leadership of the group*
- *Inspires other students to find ways to share their talents*
- *Develops excellent leadership through role modelling and professionalism*

On student, staff, and parent engagement

- *Brings together the entire educational community through a common love of music*
- *Engages a wide range of students*

Arrêtons l'intimidation!

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Conseil scolaire : *Conseil scolaire de district catholique des Aurores boréales*

Cible : *Cycles primaire, moyen et intermédiaire*

Contexte

Nous avons eu des ateliers offerts par le centre des femmes en intimidation et violence durant les années scolaires 2005-2006 et 2006-2007. Étant donné les initiatives du ministère de l'Éducation afin de sensibiliser contre l'intimidation, nous avons fait un suivi et avons développé un plan d'action au niveau de notre communauté scolaire. Nous nous sommes aperçus que notre plan allait aussi de pair avec l'initiative du développement du caractère.

Les actions entreprises

Toutes les classes, de la maternelle à la 8^e année, ont participé aux ateliers de sensibilisation à la prévention de la violence, mettant l'accent sur le respect de tous. Nous avons formé un comité d'enseignants et d'élèves pour planifier nos activités et élaborer le code de conduite. C'est là que nous avons eu l'idée de demander aux élèves du cycle moyen d'être de bons modèles (leaders) pour les plus petits.



Impact

Sur le rendement des élèves

- Développer un comportement positif (respect et entraide)
- Développer l'estime de soi
- Développer un sentiment d'appartenance

Sur la culture de l'école

- Augmenter les comportements positifs pendant les récréations
- Augmenter le niveau de respect à l'école

Sur l'engagement des élèves, du personnel, des parents, et de la communauté

- Réinvestir les comportements positifs au sein de la communauté
- Développer les qualités de leaders et de modèles

L'activité de l'immeuble

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Conseil scolaire : *Conseil scolaire de district catholique des Aurores boréales*

Cible : *Cycles primaire et moyen*

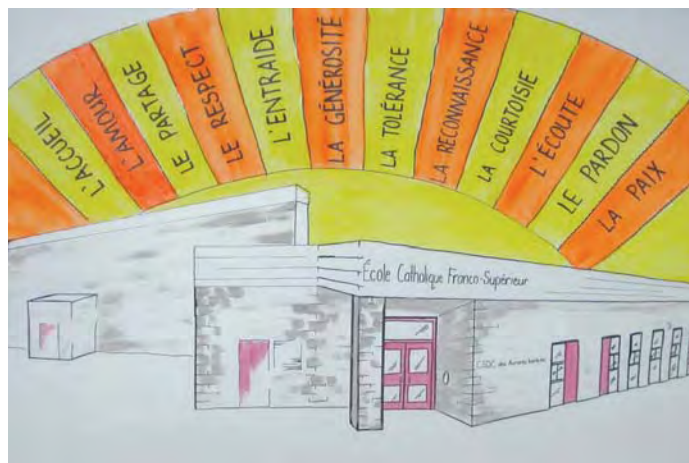
Contexte

L'immeuble représente l'école où tous les élèves (sous un même toit) vivent plusieurs activités significatives et amusantes en français afin de développer un sens d'appartenance culturelle francophone ainsi que leurs habiletés en communication orale.

Les actions entreprises

Au début de l'année, on répartit les élèves en 12 grandes « familles ». Chaque famille comprend une vingtaine d'élèves (de la maternelle à la 6^e année). Les élèves de 6^e année sont en charge de guider les plus petits et de les amener dans les classes afin d'animer les activités prévues. La « famille » qui accumule le plus grand

nombre de points se mérite un prix à la fin de l'année. Les points se divisent en deux catégories : activités compétitives et participation.



Impact

Sur le rendement des élèves

- Développer les quatre compétences visées
- Développer les valeurs de vie : par exemple, l'écoute, la tolérance, le respect de ses pairs
- Comprendre l'intention derrière la tâche, c'est-à-dire communiquer entre eux, résoudre des problèmes et travailler de manière coopérative
- Développer des habiletés en communication orale

Sur la culture de l'école

- Développer la culture francophone, leur sentiment d'appartenance et leur esprit de partage et d'entraide
- Permettre de faire des rapprochements interpersonnels entre les élèves (p. ex., dans la cour de récréation)
- Partager des valeurs communes

Sur l'engagement des élèves, du personnel, des parents, et de la communauté

- Responsabiliser les élèves de 6^e année vis-à-vis de leur « famille »
- Développer chez les élèves de 6^e leurs habiletés de leadership avec les plus petits
- Remercier les parents bénévoles et le personnel de l'école qui participent au déroulement de la pratique

Prends le volant

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Cible : *Cycle intermédiaire*

Contexte

Le but de cette pratique est d'augmenter, de développer et d'améliorer certaines habiletés sociales telles que la communication efficace, la gestion de la colère, la gestion du stress, l'affirmation de soi, l'estime de soi et faire prendre conscience aux adolescents de l'impact que les médias ont sur eux.

Les actions entreprises

L'élève est sélectionné(e) par l'intervenante et les autres membres du personnel engagés avec l'élève. Le parent est avisé que son enfant a été choisi pour faire partie du groupe puisque la participation au programme se fait sur une base volontaire. Le groupe se rencontre deux à trois fois par semaine pour des sessions de 80 minutes sur une période de 8 à 10 semaines.



Impact

Sur le rendement des élèves

- Développer les habiletés pour résoudre des problèmes
- Améliorer leur sentiment de bien-être et leur estime de soi

Sur la culture de l'école

- Améliorer les relations entre le personnel scolaire et les élèves
- Créer un climat inclusif
- Apprendre à gérer son stress, sa colère et son comportement

Sur l'engagement des élèves, du personnel, des parents, et la communauté

- Permettre aux élèves de vivre des expériences positives

Développer des qualités humaines

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Conseil scolaire : *Conseil scolaire catholique Franco-Nord*

Cible : *Cycle supérieur*

Contexte

Cette activité a pour but de développer des qualités et de renforcer des valeurs telles que le respect, la responsabilité, la justice et l'empathie chez nos élèves. Ainsi, nous voulons aider nos élèves à développer une pensée juste et une sensibilité profonde.

Les actions entreprises

- Élaborer des buts pour aider les élèves à prendre conscience de leur responsabilité sociale, à développer une pensée juste et une sensibilité profonde et à acquérir un comportement avisé;
- Élaborer un code de vie de l'école qui favorise chacune des valeurs susmentionnées et l'intégration des matières;
- Établir un partenariat avec la paroisse.



Impact

Sur le rendement des élèves

- *Augmenter la réussite du programme OASIS pour les élèves raccrocheurs par un nombre croissant de cours réussis et l'augmentation du nombre de diplômés*

Sur la culture de l'école

- *Mieux répondre aux besoins des élèves et des enseignants*

Sur l'engagement des élèves, du personnel, des parents, et de la communauté

- *Améliorer le sens d'appartenance chez tous les élèves – surtout ceux qui sont marginalisés*
- *Établir un partenariat entre l'enseignant pour la réussite des élèves (ERÉ) et l'école – incluant les élèves et le personnel*

Character Builders

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Board: *Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board*

Focus: *School Wide, Elementary*

Background

At St. Martin of Tours Elementary School, a specific yearly focus forms the backbone of school-wide character-builder activities. Each year, the focus is launched during the first week of school in daily meetings of the whole school. Each day the principal leads a discussion that explores the school's vision and shows how the year's focus is aligned with the school's plans and expectations for both students and staff. By the end of the week, everyone is clear about the kind of school that they are striving to become and the high expectations that will set the tone for the remainder of the year.

What we did

The yearly focus and character-builder activities are based on gospel values and determined by the needs of the students.

Character-builder activities include:

- morning announcements about the focus
- student posters put up around the school
- teacher-led classroom discussions
- monthly skits performed by the student council
- monthly awards to students who exemplify good character
- awards presented by fellow classmates who explain why a specific student was chosen
- pledge trees on which students hang their pledges to demonstrate specific character traits
- media recognition for the school's activities and a chance for the student's efforts to be publicly celebrated

Overall, the goal is to build one year onto the next and develop an embedded approach to character development that is visible throughout the school as the foundation of the school's culture.

Impact

On student achievement

- *Supports improved EQAO scores – designated as a “School on the Move”*

On school/system culture

- *Supports the development of a positive school culture, which can be described as a joyful, warm and caring environment*
- *Ensures that students understand and speak the same “language” and understand that they are accountable for their behaviour*
- *Decreases serious discipline issues*

On student, staff, and parent engagement

- *Increases student participation in school activities*
- *Increases parent participation in running extracurricular programs*
- *Promotes staff collaboration*

Character Ed, Character Edwina

Board: *Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board*

Focus: *Boardwide*

Background

To support the Character Builds initiative, a team consisting of educational assistants, social workers and teachers was established to develop materials for a resource kit designed for all primary division classes. The goal was to ensure that material is developmentally appropriate and enjoyable. An enhanced kit for primary special education classes was also developed to help ensure the engagement of all students.

What we did

Five of the board's ten attributes were selected as an area of focus for primary students and linked to teaching social skills. Research-based information supporting the use of puppets as an instructional strategy along with scripts for puppet shows, starring Character Ed and Character Edwina, were collated into a kit and distributed to all elementary schools. The scripts were designed to help develop social skills related to acceptance, caring,

honesty, respect and responsibility. The kit also included role-playing cards, songs, poems, activity ideas and certificates to distribute to students for showing their learning.



Impact

On student achievement

- *Supports the development of the whole student – cognitive, affective and behavioural domains*
- *Contributes to a safe, healthy and orderly school environment through social skills development*
- *Engages students in problem identification and problem solving*
- *Enhances oral communication and language skills*

On school culture

- *Supports the development of a common language*
- *Supports the development of students' self-awareness, self-discipline and understanding*
- *Supports age-appropriate learning of social skills that are central to character development*

On student and staff engagement

- *Provides clear support for staff in creating quality social skills and character lessons*
- *Uses the arts and students' natural willingness to engage in the arts to deliver curriculum content*

Deepening Our Understanding

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Board: *Keewatin-Patricia District School Board*

Focus: *Schoolwide*

Background

In 2005, the Keewatin-Patricia District School Board identified the need to increase student, parent and community involvement in local schools.

A committee of educators, parents and community members was formed to develop a plan for character education based on the Seven Grandfather Teachings of Aboriginal Cultures. An Aboriginal adviser was hired to work with administrators, school staff and community members to ensure the authenticity of the initiative.

matched the attributes. Meetings occurred regularly throughout the year and led to the development of both a school song that incorporates the attributes, and a play, *The Honourable Seven*. House league events culminated in June's Aboriginal Day, at which activities related to the Seven Grandfather Teachings were celebrated through Ojibway drumming, dancing and games.

What we did

At Red Lake Madsen Public School, the entire school population was put into house league teams based on the seven teachings: bravery, responsibility, respect, kindness, honesty, humility and wisdom. These student teams then met in assemblies to discuss, illustrate and write about what each teaching meant to them. Each team also accumulated points for demonstrating qualities that



Impact

On student achievement

- *Develops expression and literacy skills through an interdisciplinary approach*
- *Provides opportunities for students to improve their writing by expressing their thoughts about their culture*

On school culture

- *Supports a collaborative culture as students were brought closer together by sharing their thoughts and experiences with each other*
- *Supports a collaborative culture through the mingling of students and staff during activities and discussions*

On student and staff engagement

- *Provides a venue for students to showcase their talents and strengths*
- *Engages parents, family and community members in the school's activities*

The Seven Sacred Teachings
To cherish knowledge is to find wisdom.
To know love is to find peace,
To honour all of creation is to have respect.
Courage is to face life with pride.
Honesty in facing a situation is to be brave.
Humility is to know yourself as a sacred part of creation.
Truth is to know all these things.



Project Exile

Board: *Ottawa Catholic School Board*

Focus: *Secondary*

Background

The Project Exile program was developed by staff and students from the Ottawa Catholic School Board to allow students in their high schools to experience the realities of millions of people around the world, who live in refugee camps due to war, famine and natural disasters. The board's *Who is My Neighbour?* spiritual theme was the basis for this event, in which students experienced how and where they saw the face of God in their communities, especially in a crisis.

What we did

The chaplains of the OCSB formed a partnership with the Salvation Army, the City of Ottawa Police, the Canadian Armed Forces Reservists and the Ottawa Fire Department to create a simulated emergency camp at a local farm.

Upon arrival by bus from various parts of the city, 315 students and 45 teachers and chaplains filed through the “processing” area where they were registered as IDPs (internally displaced persons). They were then escorted to their shelter areas to wait until everyone had been processed. All participants were in exile for a full 13 hours.

Throughout this time students had limited access to food and water. They did not have the freedom to move about the camp; phone access was not available; and ipods, computers, MP3 players and other electronics were confiscated. The IDPs attended presentations by representatives from *Doctors Without Borders* and *Engineers Without Borders* to hear about experiences in refugee camps around the world.

Emergency aid workers and chaplains from the Salvation Army were available to talk to participants, many of whom found the experience to be very challenging, both physically and emotionally.



Impact

Every individual in society has the right to be treated with dignity and respect regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or learning ability. The Project Exile experience gave students an opportunity to explore critical thinking with regard to decision making as members of a believing community and as citizens accountable for their individual behaviour and for their behaviour within society. During their 13 hours as IDPs, the students treated each other with incredible dignity and respect.

Creating Belonging

Board: **St. Clair Catholic District School Board**

Focus: **Secondary**

Background

Ursuline College Secondary School actively works to develop relationships, partnerships, and the sense of being part of a team. The following are two ways staff, students and parents work together to make this happen.

What we did

Rhythmic Souls

Disabled and non-disabled students at Ursuline College Secondary School are paired for dance activities. The team meets weekly after school to practise. The choreography is inclusive and clearly designed with both manual and power wheelchairs in mind. The dance team, known as Rhythmic Souls, performs for dance shows, open houses, masses and prayer services to repeated standing ovations.

To watch us dance is to hear our hearts speak.

– Hopi Indian Saying

What we did

Pedagape Club

The Pedagape Club provides opportunities for students who do not enjoy traditional extracurricular options to serve others without expecting something in return. Students in the club shine as they run events such as outreach suppers, dances for members of the community with special needs and holiday parties for families in need. The club's members also regularly visit retirement homes as part of their service. A central concept is that the students themselves plan their events and decide what services they would like to provide.

"Dance is the hidden language of the soul of the body."

– Martha Graham
(American dancer, teacher and choreographer
of modern dance, 1894–1991)

Impact

On student achievement

- *Creates a strong sense of accomplishment and pride through positive school experiences*
- *Encourages goal setting for all students*

On school culture

- *Provides integrated extracurricular opportunities for students with disabilities*
- *Provides leadership opportunities for students exhibiting at-risk characteristics*
- *Creates a positive environment that encourages non-athletic students to reveal talents*
- *Fosters empathy as students become more familiar with the needs of others*

On student, staff and parent engagement

- *Engages a wide variety of students and staff*
- *Increases the number of staff, students and parents who volunteer at student-led events*
- *Expands parental involvement in school and community activities*

Character Savers

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Board: *Simcoe County District School Board*

Focus: *Schoolwide*

Background

Character attributes can sometimes be difficult to communicate because they are abstract concepts to those who do not already understand them. At Coldwater Public School, the creation of visuals that pair character attributes with images of students helps clarify the concepts.

What we did

Photos of students are used as screen savers on the school's computers. Each photo is linked to a specific character trait or to a phrase that captures a character concept. Many photos result from an annual trip by Grade 7 students to Algonquin Park.

This image captures students looking across a sunset-lit, wilderness lake and the caption “We maintain a positive attitude and have hope for the future” appears with it on many school computers.



Impact

On school culture

- *Connects character attributes to student life*
- *Delivers character messages in friendly and inclusive ways*
- *Promotes a reflective atmosphere as students contemplate the images, their messages, and each student's personal connections to them*

ACT III

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Board: *York Region District School Board*

Focus: *Boardwide*

Background

ACT (Activating Character Today) is an elementary student leadership conference that was initiated by the York Region District School Board's character program, Character Matters, as a vehicle to recognize, support and encourage the continued development of student leadership in their elementary schools. The board is celebrating its third conference, hence ACT III!

The ACT conferences focus on the following goals:

- Empower students through opportunities to model character and to observe others modelling character
- Enable students to recognize their personal potential and develop their leadership skills
- Build capacity for leadership within our schools
- Share ideas about leadership opportunities at the regional level
- Imagine possibilities for leadership potential
- Recognize existing leadership

What we did

With the exception of logistical planning, the ACT conference is entirely student-led. Teams of senior elementary students develop workshops for junior schoolmates. The purpose of this is twofold. First, it gives senior students an opportunity to continue to develop their leadership capacity in an authentic teaching/learning environment. Second, junior students have the opportunity to explore the many leadership opportunities that exist in an elementary school and the potential they have to take an active role in leading in their learning community.

Each year's conference follows a new format and generates new ideas. One of the interesting ideas that emerged from a recent conference was the creation of a blog that supports conference ideas and student-led initiatives by allowing discussion to continue throughout the year. To visit this blog, go to www.activatingcharactertoday.blogspot.com.



Impact

On student achievement

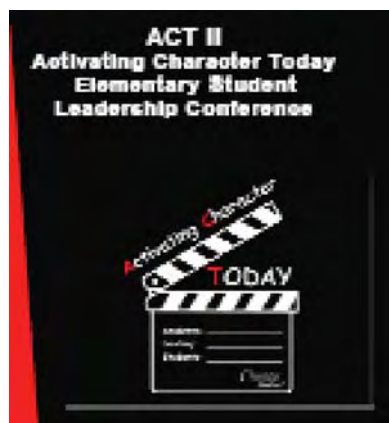
- *Increases students' ability to evaluate their responsibility levels*
- *Promotes organizational and leadership skills, which help students attain greater success*

On school culture

- *Fosters a culture of student leadership and responsibility*
- *Promotes greater participation in both school and community*
- *Creates cross-grade experiences and friendships*

On student, staff and parent engagement

- *Fosters greater student engagement through more active participation*



Supporting Materials

Elementary Student-Led Workshops

- 1. Students Teaching Students** – Student Leadership can be more than fundraising and planning dances. At Richmond Rose P.S. the Integrity Team is actively involved in the planning and teaching of the younger grades in the area of Character Matters!
- 2. Awakening the Leader Within** – What do geese, buffalo and starfish have to do with leadership? Come and participate in a fun, interactive workshop that will allow you to awaken and explore your leadership skills!
- 3. Media Matters** – This workshop focuses on how television shows display stereotypes and discrimination. Students will have the opportunity to interact and discuss how media impacts our everyday life. They will discuss strategies for dealing with media-driven stereotypes and discrimination.
- 4. Building Character Communities through Positive Citizenship** – This workshop is designed to help students understand the importance of positive citizenship as they work to build a sense of community within their classrooms and school.
- 5. The Power of One** – One person can make a difference in developing a culture of character in a school. This workshop will focus on demonstrating the power within each of us to make a positive difference in our schools.
- 6. Caring Classrooms** – The activities in this workshop will allow students the opportunity to demonstrate and learn about integrity, empathy, and leadership. Students will learn about the importance of being a positive role model and creating a caring classroom.
- 7. Cooperative Games** – Reaching a goal as a team is not always an easy task. It takes cooperation and initiative. This workshop will focus on developing team building and leadership skills through fun games and activities.
- 8. Drama Time** – At this workshop, participants will have a chance to explore character traits via drama. Through skits and scenarios, students will learn about empathy and inclusion. Students will enjoy this fun and meaningful activity.
- 9. Talking with Your Hands** – Do you like music? Do you like a challenge? Well then this is the workshop for you. Learn the Canadian National Anthem and one other song in American Sign Language. That's right! In 40 minutes you will learn how to communicate in a NEW language. It's fun and easy to do and you may even learn how to communicate with a person who is hearing impaired.
- 10. Leadership in Action: Social Justice and Global Citizenship** – This workshop describes a journey of discovery into the root causes of poverty in the world and the impact it has on all of us. In addition, participants will receive some practical suggestions on how they can take action, as global citizens, to raise awareness and change attitudes about poverty in their community.

Integrity Team

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Board: *York Region District School Board*

Focus: *Elementary*

Background

At Richmond Rose Public School, the Integrity Team is a group of 50 Grade 6 and 7 students who prepare, teach, and model lessons in character development for the schools' 600 students. The team's goals are twofold: to provide leadership opportunities to junior/intermediate division students and to provide the school community with character development activities and lessons across the curriculum. In pursuing these goals, the Integrity Team has had a profound effect on both learners and instructors, resulting in a significant impact on the Richmond Rose school community.

What we did

Integrity Team members meet several times a month (twice for lesson preparation, concept instruction, and teaching skill development) and once for lesson delivery in classrooms. As well, an average of two recess periods a week find team members on duty in the playground, modelling proper behaviour while fulfilling their playground responsibilities.

Among the projects and responsibilities taken on by the Integrity Team are:

- participating in the school's September Leadership Retreat, where team members develop plans, identify goals, and forge a team dynamic to put plans into effect
- preparing and implementing formal character lessons
- resolving conflict on the playground
- creating a School Touchstone, written collaboratively and based on broad consultation with the wider school community
- reversing integration into the school's self-contained autistic education class
- planning community outreach and parent education programs

The Integrity Team is currently developing a manual and providing workshops on how to set up Integrity Teams in schools.

Impact

On student achievement

- *Develops skills in self-expression*
- *Promotes setting goals and achieving them*
- *Promotes organizational and leadership skills*

On school culture

- *Promotes a respectful, more supportive atmosphere*
- *Creates a student-led atmosphere*
- *Develops a climate of student-to-student inspiration*
- *Develops infectious enthusiasm*

On student, staff and parent engagement

- *Engages students, staff and parents in the process of improving student behaviour*

Restorative Practice: An Alternative Disciplinary Approach

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Board: *York Region District School Board*

Focus: *Schoolwide*

Background

Data at Morning Glory Public School indicated an increase over time of office referrals, detentions, suspensions and other forms of disciplinary action. The school was also challenged by its students' lack of academic success. Teachers struggled with negative behaviours in class and believed the lack of academic success was due to the time spent on dealing with these behaviours. Yard problems and absenteeism were on the rise, support from parents was lacking, and there was general discontent among staff, students, and parents. The school-based leadership team explored alternative character development strategies, and then instituted Restorative Practices with the goal of improving the learning environment in the school.

Restorative Practice

Restorative Practice is a program that seeks to “restore” a school that has been harmed by unacceptable behaviours rather than “punish” those who exhibit these behaviours. It enables students to take responsibility for their contribution to the conflict. They must show respect for others involved and be honest in expressing their thoughts. Students are asked to write about their actions, reflect on which character traits applied to their situation, and take

steps to repair the harm they created. Staff and, at times, parents express their thoughts and feelings in follow-up meetings. Restorative Circles are sometimes used to allow all parties a safe place to express their feelings and work towards a solution.

York Region District School Board has moved toward a systemwide restorative approach model.

What we did

The staff of Morning Glory set a three-year target for decreasing office referrals and suspensions by 50 per cent. A core group of staff called the Behavioural Resource Team (BRT) was formed to direct the program, and the entire staff was given behavioural management training. A literature search was conducted, and pertinent articles and resources were distributed to staff and discussed at monthly study group sessions. The administration and the BRT used the practices daily when dealing with conflict situations. Teachers employed, and continue to employ, restorative practice theory in their classrooms, the playground and throughout the school.

Impact

Data was kept from the start of the 2002–03 school year to the end of the 2005–06 school year. In that time, the number of incidents that resulted in office referrals dropped by 53 per cent, while suspensions dropped by 44 per cent. This impacted school culture in a positive way and ensured more class time for student learning!

Curriculum Connections

Liens avec le curriculum

Conseil scolaire catholique Franco-Nord

- **Développer des connaissances** – Activité pour rendre les élèves des citoyens responsables
cours de civisme – composante « engagement social » **23**

Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board

- **Curriculum and Character Resource Binders, K–8** integration of character development across
the curriculum **24**

York Catholic District School Board

- **Character Development Resource Binder** – Monthly activities for classrooms and assemblies
tied to liturgical calendar **25**
- **Virtue Book Project** – Literacy, faith and character development **26**

York Region District School Board

- **Ethical Development and Students with Mild Intellectual Disability or Developmental Delay** –
What are the correlations between cognitive and moral development? **27**
- **Giving Grows Character** – Community partnerships, literacy, the Arts and character curriculum **28**
- **Character Education, Literacy and Music Project** – Integration of character and music
into literacy development **29**

Développer des connaissances

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Conseil scolaire : *Conseil scolaire catholique Franco-Nord*

Cible: *Cycle supérieur*

Contexte

Cette activité a pour but de développer des connaissances pour faire de nos élèves des citoyens responsables. Cette activité peut également faire partie du cours de civisme – composante « engagement social ».



Les actions entreprises

- Contrat d'engagement pour les activités parascolaires
- Visionnement du film « Elles étaient cinq »; sensibilisation à la violence, à la prévention et au sens de l'empathie
- Projet humanitaire en Jamaïque
- Collecte de nourriture pour le projet « Une canne, ça dépanne »
- Projet Ryan's Well : 2 500 \$ pour faire creuser un puits
- Activité Terry Fox

Impact

Sur le rendement des élèves

- Sensibiliser les élèves à l'importance de l'engagement responsable
- Augmenter le nombre d'élèves dits « engagés »
- Développer l'empathie par la contextualisation de situations à risques, grâce au film « Elles étaient cinq »

Sur la culture de l'école

- Conscientiser les élèves au fait que d'autres personnes dans le monde sont aussi dans le besoin et comprendre l'importance de l'engagement à l'école

Sur l'engagement des élèves, du personnel, des parents, et de la communauté

- Conscientiser la communauté et les parents à l'importance de se rallier à une cause telle que Terry Fox
- Sensibiliser les élèves et la communauté à l'empathie
- Développer l'estime de soi chez les élèves en participant à différents projets communautaires

Curriculum and Character Resource Binders, K–8

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Board: *Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board*

Focus: *Boardwide*

Background

The Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board had a vision of both cross-curricular literacy and embedded character development. This natural point of intersection resulted in the creation of three resource binders to support teachers in the primary, junior, and intermediate divisions with these two priorities.

"All learning has an emotional base."
– Plato



What we did

Each resource binder (and accompanying CD) contains cross-curricular lesson plans with a focus on literacy development. In addition to age-appropriate lessons, the binders also contain sample units from the Ontario Curriculum Unit Planner, classroom management tips, inspirational quotes, and a list of school library/literacy resources listed by character attribute. Several of the lessons provided can be used as “take home” activities that parents can do with their children.



A Character Education Resource Document

Impact

On student achievement

- *Supports literacy across the curriculum*
- *development in the curriculum*

On school culture

- *Supports improved social skills*
- *Provides ideas for classroom management*

On student, staff and parent engagement

- *Engages students through the use of stories and folk tales*
- *Supports teachers with easy-to-use resources*
- *Provides parents with support for developing good character in their children*

Character Development Resource Binder

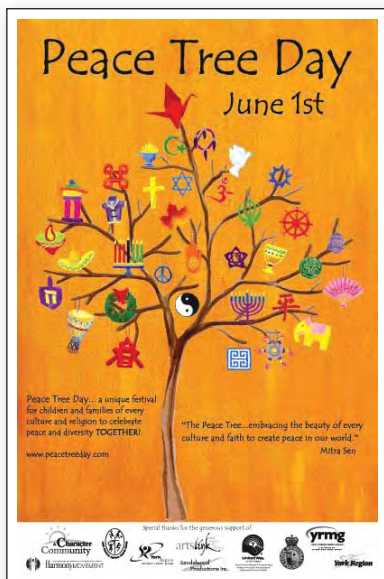
Contact Information:
Les Miller
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les.miller@ycdsb.ca

Board: *York Catholic District School Board*

Focus: *Boardwide*

Background

In a collaborative effort by the Religious Education and Equity departments, a character development resource binder was created and sent to all elementary and secondary schools in the board.



What we did

The binder provides activities for each month of the school year and includes suggestions to be used by classroom teachers or at school celebrations and assemblies. Each month focuses on a particular character attribute and is approximately aligned with the Region of York's character traits. YCDSB is a proud member of York Region's Communities of Character initiative.

An understanding heart is everything in a teacher, and cannot be esteemed highly enough. One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feeling. The curriculum is so much necessary raw material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child.

— Carl Jung

Impact

On student achievement

- *Helps students reach literacy expectations and reflect on character and virtues through recommended children's literature*
- *Embeds moral formation activities in the curriculum*

On school culture

- *Creates a positive atmosphere by facilitating positive reflection and prayer*
- *Connects schools to the community*

Virtue Book Project

Contact Information:
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Board: *York Catholic District School Board*

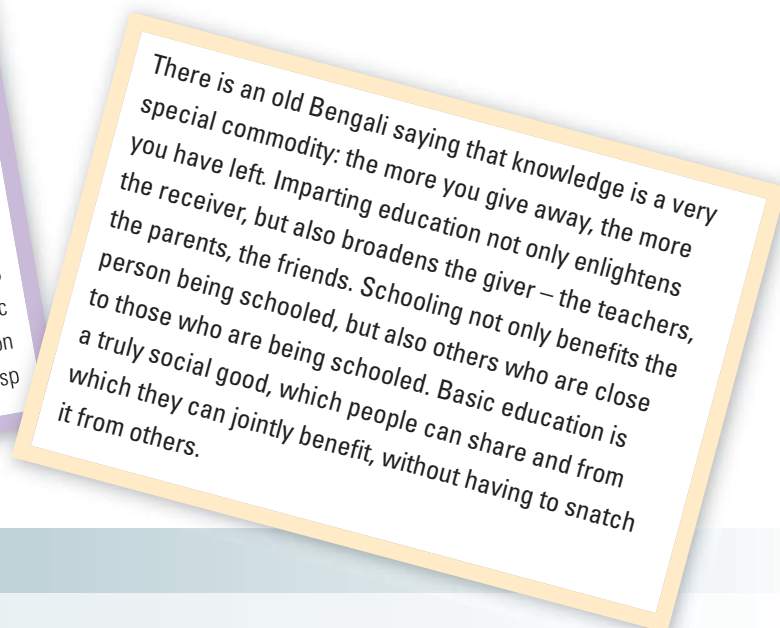
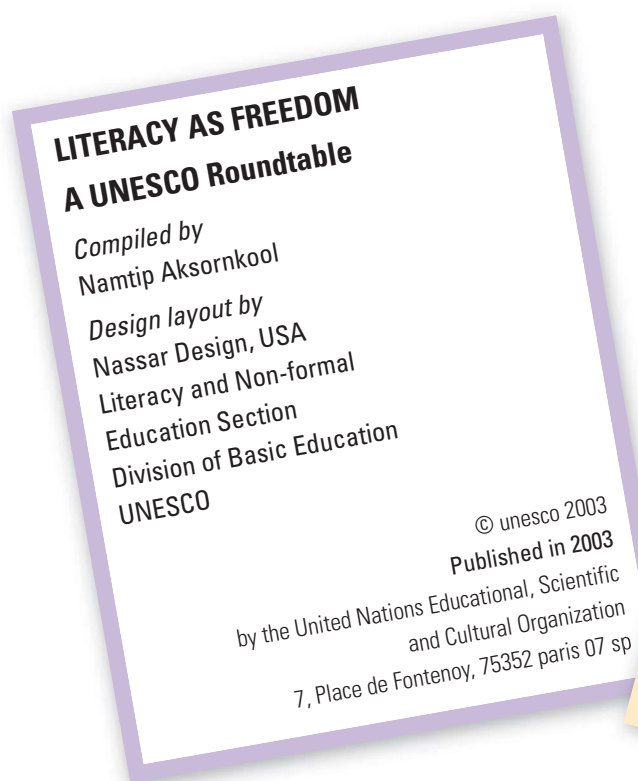
Focus: *Junior/Intermediate/Senior*

Background

The York Catholic District School Board has a strong belief that the development of character needs to be a part of all curricula. The board's focus on literacy led to the creation of a package to facilitate this integration.

What we did

In order to create a comprehensive, easy-to-use curriculum package for elementary schools, 30 books were selected for their links to character and virtue development. Three books were selected for each virtue, and age-appropriate suggestions for primary, junior and intermediate levels were developed. Lesson plans were then created to support the use of each of the texts. Lessons have been posted online as well as distributed through teacher-librarians.



Impact

On student achievement

- *Helps students reach literacy expectations as well as reflect on character and virtues through recommended children's literature*
- *Embeds moral formation activities in the curriculum*

On school culture

- *Creates a positive atmosphere by facilitating reflection and prayer*

On student, staff and parent engagement

- *Engages students in enjoyable, reflective lessons related to virtues*
- *Provides guidance for staff related to exemplary resources and lesson planning*

Ethical Development and Students with Mild Intellectual Disability or Developmental Delay

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Board: *York Region District School Board*

Focus: *Secondary MID/DD Students*

Background

The aim of this action research project was to examine classroom practice and pedagogical approaches to determine their impact on a particular group of students.

Research Questions: How does the ethical understanding of students with a mild intellectual disability or developmental delay correlate with their intellectual development? What factors other than intellect inform students' ethical understandings?

What we did

Hypothesis: MID/DD students' ethical understandings will exceed intellectual development

Methodology: A class of Grade 3 students considered to be functioning at a similar intellectual level to the secondary MID/DD students acted as a control group. Factors contributing to students' ethical understandings were isolated and categorized into Kohlberg's and Eisenberg's paradigms.

Findings: The secondary MID/DD students' ethical understandings surpassed those demonstrated by the Grade 3 control group and exceeded expectations.

Conclusion: Moral intuition is a kind of cognition, but not a kind of reasoning.

Implications: Resource selection and choice of pedagogical strategies need not be limited to traditional grade equivalent options when exploring character development. Richer and deeper materials are accessible.

Differentiation applies not just within classrooms, but within usual perceptions of ability levels. The teacher's understanding of the readiness of students that is based on evidence arrived at through action research and observation is a powerful instructional support!

Follow-up: When the findings of this research were implemented in the classroom, students assumed an assets-based approach to their learning. When students drew upon cognitive processes other than reasoning, higher levels of engagement and self-concept resulted, leading to improved demonstrations of literacy skills.

Impact

- **Student achievement:** *This research suggests that resource materials and pedagogical strategies need not be limited to apparent grade equivalents; richer and deeper materials are accessible and relevant to MID/DD students.*
- **Student engagement:** *When students drew upon cognitive processes other than reasoning, higher levels of engagement and self-concept resulted, as did an increase in literacy skills.*

Giving Grows Character

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Board: *York Region District School Board*

Focus: *Elementary*

Background

Giving Grows Character recognizes and celebrates young student heroes and heroines and is based on a partnership between Character Matters, York Region District School Board's character program, and Cadillac Fairview Ltd's Markville Shopping Centre. Students who have been changed or inspired in some way by the selfless, compassionate, or courageous act of another student are encouraged to share their stories of pivotal, changing moments with the school and community around them. The stories may be presented in any combination of art forms, thus integrating the arts, literacy and character education, depending on the student's artistic strengths and talents. Students may choose to showcase the celebration in a written format such as a poem, essay, play or short story; or through performance arts such as music, drama, painting, drawing, mosaic, or dance.

Overall, Giving Grows Character is a celebration of those people who give without being asked, presented by those who have witnessed and been changed by such giving. It is a chance for one student to say to another, "You *did* make a difference! Congratulations and thank you!"

What we did

Each student has a story to share, one that exemplifies or pays tribute to any of the dozens of character traits that he or she may have seen demonstrated by another student. The story can be as simple as acknowledging the Grade 3 student who stops in the hallway regularly to help younger Grade 1 students with winter boots or jackets, to the tale of the courageous Grade 8 student who inspired an entire cancer fundraising campaign. The student with a story to tell is referred to as the *nominator*; the student about whom the story is told is called the *nominee*. It is the nominator's job to develop a presentation that artistically represents the character traits displayed in the act of "heroism" that changed his or her life or outlook.

This initiative is tied to assessment, evaluation and the literacy and arts expectations, with detailed lesson plans to ensure consistency across schools.

Impact

On student achievement

- *Fosters self-esteem and a sense of accomplishment*
- *Motivates students to develop skills for self-expression*
- *Provides opportunities for students to communicate in medium of their choice*

On school culture

- *Inspires staff and students to increase helping acts*
- *Creates a sense of celebration of good character*
- *Develops a climate of student-to-student inspiration*

On student, staff and parent engagement

- *Engages students, staff and parents in a dynamic culture that celebrates heroic student acts and attributes that might not otherwise be acknowledged*



Character Education, Literacy and Music Project

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Board: *York Region District School Board*

Focus: *Regional Elementary*

Background

In the integrated Character Education, Literacy and Music Project, the following goals guided the program design:

- engaging students in reading and writing for different purposes
- enhancing understanding of writing lyrics and of the effective use of songs to convey a message
- exploring songwriting as a medium to aid the delivery of a language arts program
- developing personal connections to specific character education attributes through in-depth exploration of individual attributes over the course of months of daily activities
- increasing knowledge of the elements of music and how they can be manipulated to create various effects in a musical composition.

Music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent.

– Victor Hugo

What we did

In each of the four years of this project, ten schools were selected to work together with artist-in-residence Greg Lawless to write ten original songs based on specific character attributes. The project combined the talent and expertise of artists, students and educators. A variety of resources were studied in class and then used as inspiration for the themes for students' songs. During the artist-in-residence sessions, students explored ways of writing lyrics in order to effectively convey a message through song and to use music as a mode of expression. By using character development ideas as a platform for the content of the songs, students engaged in rich and deeply reflective learning, which led to personal growth. The project culminated in a live evening performance by all of the schools involved, along with Greg and his band, in a community theatre setting.

Impact

On student achievement

- *Creates meaningful reading and writing experiences*
- *Develops high-level skills in literacy analysis*
- *Develops skills in self-expression*
- *Promotes setting goals and achieving them*
- *Integrates performance excellence with ethical excellence*

On school culture

- *Promotes a respectful, more supportive atmosphere*

On student, staff and parent engagement

- *Creates fun, highly engaging lessons that provide many entry points into learning*
- *Invites parental and community participation and celebration in the work of students in literacy, music and character*

Students

"The best day of my life! I will remember singing with a band for the rest of my life. I feel good inside. This unit on empathy changed my life."

"I really have been better at recess with other kids by showing empathy."

Educators

"As a school administrator, I believe this project not only had benefits to the class involved but to the school as a whole. The character trait of empathy became a schoolwide focus. The spirit demonstrated in the Grade 5 class was contagious. A very worthwhile project."

"The students showed a real sense of pride and ownership over the entire process, and it was a huge experience for the shy, easily intimidated crew. Quite a few of my quiet ones really came out of their shell for this. It was great to see."

School Based: Cross Panel Integration

Milieu scolaire : interpalier

Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario

- **For Youth, By Youth** – Volunteerism as service, student engagement, student leadership building **31**

Ottawa Catholic School Board

- **Backyard Festival** – Bringing together education partners in celebration **32**

Upper Canada District School Board

- **Real to Reel** – Arts, character and community media project **33**

York Region District School Board

- **Creating a Touchstone** – answering and living “What do we value?” **34**
- **Georgina Mayor’s Youth Forum** – Student engagement through civic and community participation and extended partnerships **36**
- **Peer to Peer: Mediation and Conflict Resolution** – secondary students trained, then train others elementary students **37**

For Youth, By Youth

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Board: *Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario*

Focus: *Boardwide*

Background

The Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario uses the resource *How to Volunteer This Year* to guide students through their 40-hour community involvement requirement. Educators also incorporate this booklet into teaching while fulfilling curriculum requirements.

Table of Contents:

Introduction
Self-Evaluation (Interests and Skills Test)
Types of Organizations (Jobs That You Can Volunteer For!)
Youth Gone Above and Beyond (And Making A Real Difference!)
How to Help From Home (Ways To Raise Money and Awareness)
Fundraising Ideas
The "Think Again!" List
Ineligible Volunteer Activities (What the Ministry of Education Disallows)
How You Can Make a Difference (Steps to Starting Your Own Organization)
How to Write a Press Release
About the Author (A Teen Just Like You!)
Special Thanks

What we did:

How to Volunteer This Year is a handbook that was created by the Ryan's Well Foundation. Written by Genevieve Arnaud, a volunteer for the foundation and a student at St. Michael Catholic High School, the 25-page booklet explains how youth can become involved in volunteering within their community. Designed and produced with the support of the Canadian International Development Agency, the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario, the Upper Canada District School Board and the Faculty of Education of the University of Ottawa. This booklet includes inspirational quotes, student volunteer profiles and a considerable amount of "how to" information.

Curriculum Links

- Grade 9 Geography: Global Connections
- Grade 9 Guidance and Career Education:
 - Personal Knowledge and Management Skills
 - Exploration of Opportunities
- Grade 10 Career Studies:
 - Exploration of Opportunities
 - Discovering the Workplace – Personal Management

Impact

On student achievement

- *Develops depth of character that positively affects academic endeavours*

On school culture

- *Creates opportunities to live our beliefs*
- *Creates a common articulation of character development in relation to the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations*

On student, staff and parent engagement

- *Encourages giving and sharing that lead to the experience of gratitude for what we have to give*
- *Builds awareness of social justice issues*
- *Develops student leadership skills*
- *Encourages partnerships with parents and community at multiple levels*

Backyard Festival

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Board: *Ottawa Catholic School Board*

Focus: *Schoolwide*

Background

The Backyard Festival was an idea that grew and grew. In the end, six months of preparation by a large team of organizers led to a day-long celebration of who St. Patrick's High School community members are as members of their faith and civic communities.

What we did

1. A survey was written, completed, and its results compiled under the direction of the marketing teacher and his students.
2. The survey indicated where students came from, their faith affiliation and their ethnic background.
3. The survey showed that 198 of the school's 1100 students were Canadian at birth, and less than 50 per cent of the student body was Roman Catholic. The student population had roots in 78 countries, spoke over 70 languages, and practised more than 20 different faiths.
4. Once we knew who the students were, authentic and inclusive celebrations of the community could be planned. The goal was that no person would feel left out.
5. The day began with a total community, multi-faith prayer service. This service included a huge map of the world with each country of origin highlighted. Maps of countries of origin were projected onto the wall, and students from each country stood up and were cheered as the countries were called out.
6. The entire school community assembled inside a large shamrock, the official school emblem, and had their picture taken.
7. A multi-cultural lunch included a traditional Canadian BBQ as well as dishes from around the world.
8. An open-house concept was used to showcase the efforts of various students and departments to embed multi-cultural practices in St. Patrick's daily routines. Participants were encouraged to ask questions as they toured the school.
9. The day ended with a talent show in the cafeteria, and an Ultimate Frisbee competition in the back field. Students did not want to go home at the end of the day.

Impact

On student achievement

- *Fosters an incredible sense of pride in students and in the school*
- *Promotes a sense of belonging, a foundation for academic achievement*

On school culture

- *Promotes the celebration of people's cultures and their stories*
- *Creates a collaborative atmosphere*
- *Creates meaningful opportunities for student-led activities*

On student, staff and parent engagement

- *Provides opportunities for students to showcase their cultures and their personal talents*
- *Engages staff and leads to greater understanding of their students*
- *Fosters sense of belonging in parents as they see their backgrounds celebrated*

Real to Reel

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Board: *Upper Canada District School Board*

Focus: *Boardwide*

Background

The early days of character development in the Upper Canada District School Board saw an initiative to stop the bullying in our schools. Recognizing the need for more community input, the board hosted its first town hall meeting. The purpose of the evening was to develop awareness in the community at large about the issue as well as to enlist volunteers to be part of fact-finding teams who were to research character education. Teams, consisting of parents, teachers, trustees, community partners, federation representatives, municipal councillors, and clergy, were given various research tasks. These included reviewing books, visiting school boards that had established character development programs and attending conferences that featured keynote speakers and workshops.

At a second town hall meeting, the fact-finding teams shared their research, and common themes emerged. From this discussion a list of 20 attributes was arrived at that encompassed the notion of character. In the months that followed, parents, teachers, students, community members, and all UCDSB staff were asked to vote on the most important of these virtues. What emerged was Character Always!, a living credo based on the

eight chosen virtues, which are: caring, empathy, fairness, honesty, perseverance, respect, responsibility, and resilience.

The Real to Reel project is one of the activities that was set in motion by the board's commitment to Character Always!

What we did

In order to promote and capture student reflections on Character Always!, the board hosted the Real to Reel student film festival, a Cannes-type gala that showcased films and short clips produced by students in Grades 3 to 12, each featuring a character theme from a student's perspective.

Students from schools throughout the board participated in training sessions, which provided them with the technical skills needed to make their film or clip. In the final activity, which brought together all of the students and teachers involved in Real to Reel, a DVD was produced and given to all participants so that they could share the fruits of their labour with their fellow classmates.

Impact

On student achievement

- *Links technical skills with content and purpose, leading to purposeful achievement*
- *Promotes setting goals and achieving them*
- *Raises students' expectations of their abilities*

On school culture

- *Promotes inclusive culture by inviting students of widely ranging ages to participate*
- *Empowers youth to become agents of positive, lasting change*
- *Promotes peer-to-peer character development*

On student, staff and parent engagement

- *Provides a fun opportunity to explore learning*
- *Engages students by inviting them to express their perspectives*

Creating a Touchstone

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Board: *York Region District School Board*

Focus: *Schoolwide*

Background

Creating a Touchstone was a project initiated by the Character Matters Collaborative Learning Group. Richmond Rose Elementary School empowered its Integrity Team (made up of students from Grades 6 to 8) to canvass their school community, including parent council members, students, staff and administrators for their input on the question, What do we value? Once the data was collected, they worked collaboratively with their staff adviser and administration to construct the following touchstone:

At Richmond Rose, we take responsibility
for our work, words, and actions.
We put in our best efforts, enjoy our successes,
and learn from our mistakes.
We embrace each other's differences and care
for each other's feelings.
We think before we speak and use words
that are appropriate for school.
Our community is a safe community, a place where
we treat people with kindness, respect, and dignity.
No one is afraid at our school.
At Richmond Rose we are free to succeed!

What we did

Each day a phrase from the touchstone is read during morning announcements in order to expose students to the terminology. Often the phrase is the basis for a moment of silent meditation. Teachers use the touchstone language in their dealings with students on a daily basis, both when negative behaviour needs addressing, and more importantly, when positive behaviour needs praise.

A mural featuring the touchstone is displayed in the school's main foyer, and posters bearing the creed can be found in every room. The touchstone also graces the first page of every K–8 homework agenda, and student-made touchstone posters line the hallways. Each month formal lessons are given on the topic of one touchstone character trait. Regular assemblies celebrating student success feature its language as well. Peer mediators use the “No one is afraid...” section as a watchword against bullying and teasing in the schoolyard.

Students sent to the office to speak with administrators respond to such reflective questions as: How do your actions break with the spirit of the touchstone? What can you do in the future to keep to the idea and expectations of the touchstone? The questions provide a guide for students about the school expectations for their behaviour – expectations that the students came up with themselves.

Richmond Rose sports teams have incorporated the touchstone into their structures as well. Team members and their parents sign a letter acknowledging the touchstone as a guideline for behaviour both in practices and when representing the school at competition. If students break the code of the touchstone, they may be asked to leave the team. If they are, they will understand why. The language of the touchstone is becoming a common dialect in our school community.

Richmond Rose has successfully “branded” its personal character message. It doesn't matter what grade, what class, what hallway – the thread of the touchstone is a constant, allowing a set of expectations that has become standard and recognized by all.



Touchstone

“When the great library of **Alexandria** burned, the story goes, one book was saved. But it was not a valuable book; and so a poor man who could read a little bought it for a few coppers.

This book wasn’t very interesting, but between its pages there was something very interesting, indeed. It was a thin strip of vellum on which was written the secret of the **‘Touchstone’**!

The touchstone was a small pebble that could turn any common metal into pure gold. The writing explained that it was lying among thousands and thousands of other pebbles that looked exactly like it. But the secret was this: The real stone would feel warm, while ordinary pebbles are cold.

So the man sold his few belongings, bought some simple supplies, camped on the seashore, and began testing pebbles.

He knew that if he picked up ordinary pebbles and threw them down again because they were cold, he might pick up the same pebble hundreds of times. So, when he felt one that was cold, he threw it into the sea.

He spent a whole day doing this but none of them was the touchstone. Yet he went on and on this way. Pick up a pebble. Cold – throw it into the sea. Pick up another. Throw it into the sea.

The days stretched into weeks and the weeks into months.

One day, however, about midafternoon, he picked up a pebble and it was warm! He threw it into the sea before he realized what he had done. He had formed such a strong habit of throwing each pebble into the sea that when the one he wanted came along, he still threw it away.

So it is with opportunity.

Unless we are vigilant, it’s easy to fail to recognize an opportunity when it is in hand, and it’s just as easy to throw it away.”

— Author unknown,
from **Bits and Pieces** (Economics Press)

Impact

On student achievement

- Provides a clear sense of high expectations
- Creates student leaders

On school culture

- Fosters a culture of personal and collective responsibility
- Fosters a culture of kindness, respect and dignity

On student, staff and parent engagement

- Engages students by stimulating interest in creating their own culture
- Encourages parents’ support for character education ideals
- Excites teachers by creating a collaborative atmosphere for their work

Georgina Mayor's Youth Forum

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Board: *York Region District School Board*

Focus: *Civic engagement*

Background

The Georgina Mayor's Youth Forum is an initiative that promotes and facilitates students' civic engagement. York Public and Catholic Boards of Education, elementary and secondary schools, and a First Nation school work collaboratively to support the initiative.

Keswick High School initiated regular meetings of its seven elementary feeder schools' staff character contacts in 2004. At these meetings, it was decided that invitations to the Executive Director of the Character Council of York Region and the Mayor of Georgina would be extended. Both attended subsequent meetings at which the idea of the Georgina Mayor's Youth Forum was born.

What we did

The first forum welcomed 3 to 6 students from each of the municipality's 3 high schools and 14 elementary schools. The students, ranging in age from 11 to 18, represented a range of academic abilities, experiences and interests.

The meeting followed a townhall format. Students learned about the workings of municipal government while the mayor and the councillors learned about youth concerns in the areas of safety and security, communications, sports, the arts, and the environment. At the end of the meeting, the students, mayor and councillors committed to improvements in these areas.

Through the Mayor's Youth Forum, students have been brought into a working relationship with the community's businesses and social service organizations. An enriched, intergenerational understanding has developed that has raised hopes and lowered barriers. Tangible evidence of youth and community cooperation can be seen in the development of a skateboard park, outdoor ice rinks, artistic graffiti boards, character logos and literature in public places.

The relationships forged among the students, their schools and the community have made Georgina a better place for all.

Impact

On students

- *Creates opportunities for civic involvement and leadership by a wide range of students*
- *Builds students' confidence with regard to their ability to overcome challenges*
- *Creates a forum for positive cooperation with peers*
- *Creates opportunities for students to make a tangible difference in their community*

On the community

- *Builds intergenerational relationships, trust and respect*
- *Promotes community understanding of adolescent needs and development*
- *Kindles community support for the pursuit of academic and ethical excellence*
- *Creates a community-wide culture of caring*

On educators

- *Builds bridges between the schools and school boards in the community*

Peer to Peer: Mediation and Conflict Resolution

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Board: *York Region District School Board*

Focus: *Intermediate/Senior*

Background

In a joint venture between the Safe and Supportive Schools Initiative and the Character Matters Initiative, student conflict resolution/mediation teams were trained in all secondary schools across the board.

What we did

At Huron Heights Secondary School, students were trained as mediators to help provide a conflict resolution process for peers. Mediators also trained elementary feeder school students in mediation and conflict resolution. As senior mediators helped build a network of both secondary and elementary school mediators, they became a powerful cross-panel force for creating positive school culture.

SOME GOALS OF PEER MEDIATION

- To provide hands-on opportunities for character development
- To provide a safe, orderly and caring climate that is supportive of teaching and learning
- To help students gain an understanding of the nature of conflict while retaining respect for individual differences
- To empower students to peacefully resolve the conflicts that are a part of their lives
- To create a culture of students supporting students
- To enable students to refine and extend their knowledge and skill levels for problem solving, decision making, and conflict resolution
- To provide an opportunity for students to “open up” to their peers when they feel reluctant to approach adults
- To respond proactively to the need for positive conflict resolution skills

Impact

On student achievement

- *Promotes a calmer environment which supports more focused learning and greater academic success*

On school culture

- *Creates an atmosphere of increased student responsibility*

On student, staff and parent engagement

- *Develops student leadership skills, which give students the confidence to come forward with their own initiatives*
- *Engages staff and parents in supporting peer mediation as the benefits to all become apparent*

District Level and Community Successful Practices

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Catholic Character and Culture Steering Committee

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Board: *Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board*

Focus: *Boardwide*

Background

The Character Development Initiative provides directors with a unique opportunity to articulate the key system messages that inform the educational culture of their boards. In the Algonquin and Lakeshore District School Board, the director chairs the Catholic Character and Culture Steering Committee, which reflects a wide range of stakeholders, including trustees, administrative staff, teachers, support staff, parents and students. It is the role of the steering committee to oversee the implementation of the boards' character development initiative.

In addition, the committee conducted 20 community forums with parents and community members between February and April 2007 and will use the feedback from these forums to develop their next steps.

"When everyone – staff, students and partners – can articulate and demonstrate why it is good that we are here, then I will know that we have truly realized our mission."

– Michael Schmitt
Director, Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board

What we did

One of the first mandates of the committee was to develop a boardwide theme to clearly express that character development is a central aspect of Catholic education. The theme, *Lord, it is good for us to be here – Matthew 17:4*, led to the commissioning of a logo and banners for all schools/sites. Catholic character and culture was then specifically celebrated across the system at the annual Catholic Education Week Eucharistic Celebration during which the banners were blessed. A support resource, *What Does It Mean to Be a Catholic School?*, was created as a tool to help schools assess how well they are integrating Catholic character and culture into their School Improvement Plan.

Leadership is not so much about technique and methods as it is about opening the heart. Leadership is about inspiration—of oneself and of others. Great leadership is about human experiences, not processes. Leadership is not a formula or a program, it is a human activity that comes from the heart and considers the hearts of others. It is an attitude, not a routine.

More than anything else today, followers believe they are part of a system, a process that lacks heart. If there is one thing a leader can do to connect with followers at a human, or better still a spiritual level, it is to become engaged with them fully, to share experiences and emotions, and to set aside the processes of leadership we have learned by rote.

Lance Secretan

Impact

On system culture

- *Promotes clarity and consistent language around the Character Development Initiative*
- *Provides a clear message about the importance of this initiative in the district*
- *Motivates the district to engage in dialogue and action*
- *Connects character development to the central mission of Catholic education*
- *Creates wide recognition and acceptance of the mandates of Catholic character and culture*

Le respect, ça s'apprend!

Conseil scolaire : *Conseil scolaire public du Grand Nord de l'Ontario*

Cible : *Cycles primaire, moyen, intermédiaire et supérieur; ensemble du conseil et communauté*

Contexte

Le conseil a mis sur pied une équipe d'action dans chacune de ses écoles; chaque équipe est composée de la direction d'école, d'un membre du personnel enseignant, d'un membre du personnel de soutien, d'un parent et d'un élève (au palier secondaire) et d'une experte-conseil. Leur mandat est d'évaluer la situation de leur école dans le dossier de la sécurité, du développement du caractère et de planifier, en collaboration avec toute leur communauté scolaire, les interventions à réaliser afin d'améliorer le climat de l'école et de développer des comportements positifs, responsables et civiques chez les élèves.



Les actions entreprises

Durant l'année scolaire 2005-2006, le conseil a : (1) planifié le projet en collaboration avec les directions d'école; (2) organisé une journée pédagogique pour tout le personnel enseignant et de soutien dont le thème portait sur la sécurité, le développement du caractère et la discipline positive et préventive; (3) mis sur pied une équipe d'action et a élaboré un document d'appui; (4) accompagné l'équipe d'action discipline dans la planification de leurs interventions.

Durant l'année scolaire 2005-2006, le conseil a également : (5) demandé à l'équipe d'action de participer au colloque provincial du développement du caractère; (6) accompagné l'équipe d'action de chacune des écoles dans la révision de ses plans pour l'année scolaire 2006-2007; (7) mis en œuvre des plans d'action dans les écoles; (8) planifié une journée pour toutes les équipes d'action; présenté le document *Vers des points communs* et; (9) évalué le plan d'action de l'année scolaire 2006-2007 et élaboré celui de l'année scolaire 2007-2008.

Impact

Sur le rendement des élèves

- *Développer des comportements positifs, responsables et civiques chez les élèves de tout âge et optimiser le temps accordé à l'apprentissage*

Sur la culture de l'école

- *Créer un meilleur climat dans les écoles et établir un sens de sécurité*
- *Augmenter la participation de plus d'intervenants et intégrer diverses initiatives du ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario (Intimidation, Développement du caractère et Sécurité et discipline dans les écoles)*

Sur l'engagement des élèves, du personnel, des parents, et de la communauté

- *Créer un sentiment d'appartenance et de collaboration*
- *Augmenter le sens de responsabilité auprès des élèves et du personnel enseignant et de soutien*
- *Apporter des résultats positifs au sein des diverses communautés*

Character in the Workplace

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Board: *Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board*

Focus: *Boardwide*

Background

The Character in the Workplace initiative began with the challenge from the director that employees begin a dialogue about what character could/should look/sound/feel like in the workplace. Soon after, a Character in the Workplace committee was formed with the mandate to promote and raise awareness of the ten character attributes chosen and defined through community consultation. The committee's work is founded on the conviction that embedding our character attributes in the daily work life of staff is what makes Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board a "good place to work" and, by extension, a "good place to learn".

Adult codes of behaviour are becoming more prevalent as communities work to define their aspirations through behaviours. A code of behaviour can:

- help create a sense of joint purpose
- support relationship building
- make explicit the values that tend to remain implicit
- help new staff quickly identify with the culture of workplace

What we did

The Character in the Workplace committee organized a training session for all Education Centre staff and initiated professional development for all employees not located in schools. This session was designed to correspond with the professional development of staff working in schools. The committee established a character trait per month, which is displayed in the main foyer of the Education Centre and on bulletin boards throughout administrative buildings. A Character in the Workplace newsletter, the *Character Chronicle*, complemented the monthly meetings at which staff had opportunities to promote and celebrate the attribute of the month by bringing forward examples of both demonstrations and recognition of good character in fellow staff. The newsletter has evolved into a widely distributed publication, known as *The Rapport*, which focuses on connecting staff to each other in meaningful ways and profiling staff who exemplify the character attributes. As they move forward, the committee anticipates connecting the character initiative with community activities.

The artwork on the cover of this document is an example of a learning activity profiled by the committee.

Impact:

On system culture

- *Supports a collaborative, collegial work culture*
- *Develops common understandings and beliefs*
- *Creates an atmosphere of celebration*
- *Ensures that non-school staff see themselves as integral to the overall character development initiative*

Heart and Soul

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Board: *Keewatin-Patricia District School Board*

Focus: *Boardwide*

Background

In 2005, the Keewatin-Patricia District School Board identified a need to increase student, parent and community involvement in local schools.

After researching successful practices from other Ontario boards, a committee of educators, parents and community members developed a plan for character education based on the Seven Grandfather Teachings of Aboriginal Cultures. An Aboriginal adviser was hired to work with administrators, school staff and community members to ensure the authenticity of the initiative's implementation.

What we did

The Character Education Steering Committee developed a plan to build support and understanding for the Heart and Soul initiative. Senior administrators made commitments to facilitate two-day workshops for staff that were designed to heighten their passion for teaching and working with students, as well as to enhance their understanding of the Aboriginal experience and the Seven Grandfather Teachings: love, respect, humility, bravery, truth, wisdom, and honesty. Teachers were encouraged to explore their initial attraction to teaching and contemplate the legacies they hoped to leave their students and their schools and communities.

Heart and Soul celebrates the dedication of all educators and staff in the Keewatin-Patricia District School Board, at the same time as it integrates community values into teaching and board practices.

Impact

On student achievement

- *Promotes the integration of culture and character development into the curriculum*

On school and system culture

- *Supports greater understanding among students, staff, parents and community members about Aboriginal cultures, traditions and perspectives*
- *Fosters positive interactions among teachers and Aboriginal students*
- *Fosters a more responsive, understanding and supportive environment in classrooms and schools in general*
- *Explicitly values equity and equity of outcome as board priorities*

On student engagement

- *increases student engagement as teaching and board practices reflect understanding and respect for Aboriginal cultures*

The initiative was entitled Heart and Soul, and a presentation was created to reflect a consistent message of respect for the commitment and integrity of students and staff across the board. This presentation has become a cornerstone of board events and a touchstone of pride for students and staff. In addition, all schools engaged their own students, staff and community members through the development of “T” statements around the Seven Grandfather Teachings. This gave all a deep sense of ownership for their character development work and resulted in the broader community becoming directly involved in what was happening at their local schools.

You never know when a little word or something you do may open up the windows of a mind that seeks the light...

Take Care

Take care of the special gifts and talents that are yours.
Work hard to develop them.
Be wise in how you use them.

Take care of relationships.
Keep and seek those that contribute to your self-esteem and well-being.

Take care of the values you hold to be important;
The values that enrich your life and the lives of others.

Take care of the lessons you have learned.
Bring them into clear focus
Let them guide you during times of challenge and experiences of failure and success.

Take care of your hopes.
They are the source of a better tomorrow...a better world.

— Cile Chavez



Who is My Neighbour?

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Board: *Ottawa Catholic School Board*

Focus: *Boardwide*

Background

To bring focus to the board's character development efforts, the spiritual theme Who Is My Neighbour? was selected and embedded in ongoing explorations and activities related to this question.

Well-thought-out, open-ended questions can transform because they can:

- invoke deeper thought
- clarify thinking
- open up possibilities
- suggest new points of view
- grant ownership
- offer a focus
- send us on an exploratory journey
- connect us with previously unexamined beliefs

What we did

The Who Is My Neighbour? theme is the foundation of a wide range of activities throughout the OCSB system. A vice-principals' conference featured both discussion groups and presentations on the topic. Over 3,000 staff from throughout the board attended an address by Marc Kielburger, chief executive director of Free the Children, who challenged all to respond to the needs of the poor and vulnerable in our schools, our society, and our world. The Who is My Neighbour? theme also extended directly into the schools, as students participated in activities that link the question to character attributes, gospel values and Catholic School Graduate Expectations. The theme was on the minds of youth leaders from high schools across the board as they planned school-based responses to social justice issues and, taking up Marc Kielburger's challenge, attended a conference at which they spoke with local people who are without homes.

Impact

On student achievement

- *Promotes sense of belonging through development of a caring environment*
- *Helps students develop pride in themselves*

On school and system culture

- *Empowers youth to become agents of positive, lasting change*
- *Engages youth in social justice issues*

On student, staff and parent engagement

- *Engages the entire community in the reflection process by using a question as a rallying theme*

Building Awareness through the Annual Report

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Board: *Simcoe County District School Board*

Focus: *District and Community-Wide*

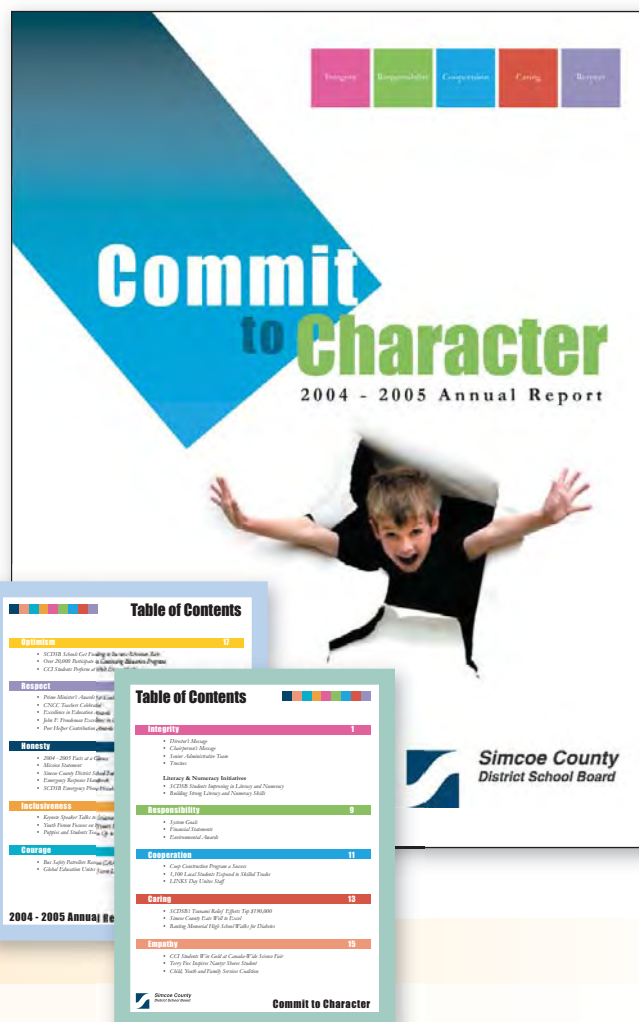
Background

In 2004, the Simcoe County District School Board made a boardwide commitment to teach, model, promote and celebrate ten character attributes identified through a six-month community consultation process. Educators, students, parents, staff and members of faith and business communities were well represented in the process of implementing the board's character development initiative, and all schools were invited to develop local initiatives based on the ten attributes.

What we did

The Simcoe County District School Board's 2004–05 Annual Report, entitled *Commit to Character*, showcased the system's ten attributes through the lyrics of ten songs composed by SCDSB students from ten schools in collaboration with an Ontario musician. The report was organized into sections with the ten attributes as their titles. It was posted on the board's website and was widely distributed throughout the county, to organizations both within and beyond the education sector, including municipal governments, service agencies, and seniors' centres.

It was also sent to hospitals and doctor's offices, for placement in waiting rooms.



Impact

On student achievement

- *Contributes to system pride and provides motivation to improve*
- *Promotes the integration of the teaching of character attributes into the curriculum*

On school and system culture

- *Contributes to understanding what the attributes look like in action*
- *Illustrates board commitment to modelling the attributes for schools and board staff*

On student, parent, community engagement

- *Illustrates the board's commitment to partnerships through the valuing of community programs and initiatives*

Second Phase Community Consultations

What we did

The Simcoe County District School Board enthusiastically welcomed the ministry's Finding Common Ground: Character Development in Ontario Schools, K–12 initiative, which was launched in October, 2006, with a key expectation of collaborative community consultation. As the board's original consultation had taken place three years earlier, its Central Character Committee wanted to revisit the consultative process to both demonstrate commitment to the success of the initiative and to gather

information about progress and impact. The committee decided to hold a Second Phase Community Consultation to present information about the key beliefs and expectations of the initiative, to share the progress and successes of character development work within their schools and communities, and to gather input for future planning. Representatives from a wide cross-section of the board community attended. In the discussions, which were vibrant and engaging, both areas of pride and areas in which the board and its schools were challenged to increase their character development focus were identified.

What are we doing well?	Potential next steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognition of character assemblies• Partnerships with the community• Communication through newsletters• Student-driven anti-bullying initiatives• Conversations increasing social awareness• Character traits and definitions well known• Student recognition initiatives• Student engagement at all levels and all ages• Improved atmosphere in the school, i.e., interactions in offices and classrooms are more positive• Team feeling• Students are more courteous• Character is more meaningful to all students• Personal reflection is important• Attributes are displayed in different forms across the board• Grassroots initiatives are encouraged• Attributes interwoven across curriculum• Attributes are being used in discussion with students and staff• Examples of community involvement – food drives, Terry Fox Runs, local and global service initiatives• Group work, more inclusive – “don’t leave anyone out”• Leadership is keeping us current and well informed• Promoting and developing character through sport (athletes and coaches)• Everyone is part of it – all staff• Student and staff buy-in• Opportunities to celebrate and share ideas• “You know when you are in a SCDSB school”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased community outreach – seek avenues for increased connection• Focus on at-risk students• Media connections• Pursue corporate support funding• Promote varied, successful programs and initiatives across the county• Share and discuss school climate survey• Market “Commit to Character” visuals in the community• Continue to pursue student engagement• Enhance the sharing of best practices – from student to parent to community• Engage the greater community• Ask students to share experiences with business and community agencies• Engage parents in partnerships – focus on character anytime people get together• Encourage student leadership• Include more hands-on service opportunities• Continue to refine ways to recognize our students even at the board level• Incorporate ecological initiatives into the focus on character• Continue to emphasize that good character goes beyond wearing the T-shirt• School councils – integrate character focus as an item on meeting agendas• Continue to align traits with real-world applications• Student symposium on character• Conflict resolution / conflict managers / restorative justice / peer mediation programs

Impact

On student achievement

- *Identifies areas in which character development can be integrated into the curriculum and school/community activities*
- *Identifies areas for monitoring and assessment opportunities*

On school and system culture

- *Contributes to understanding about what the attributes look like in action*
- *Illustrates the board's commitment to collaborative consultation processes*

On student, parent, community engagement

- *Contributes to systemwide pride and the continual motivation to improve*
- *Contributes to valuing the voices that make up the wider educational community*

Posters: Connecting to Character

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Board: **York Catholic District School Board**

Focus: **Boardwide**

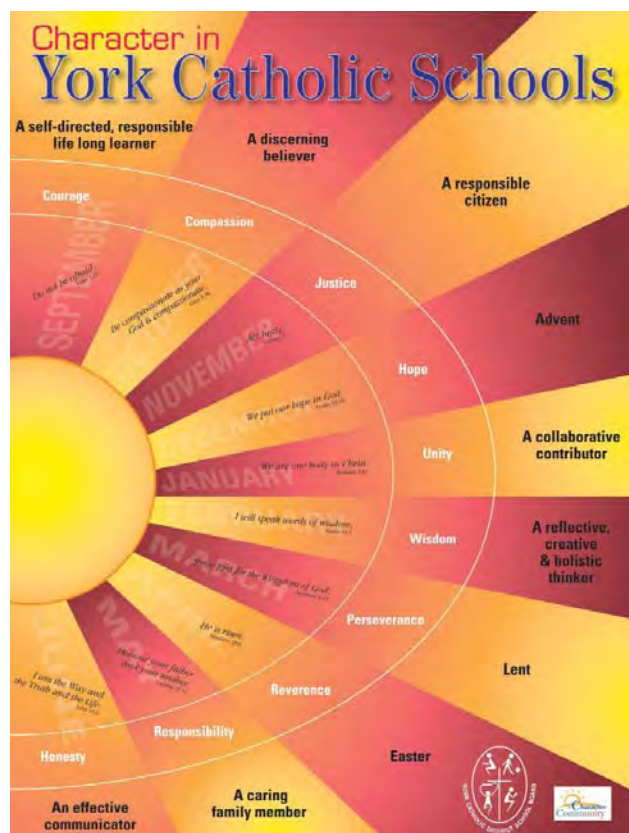
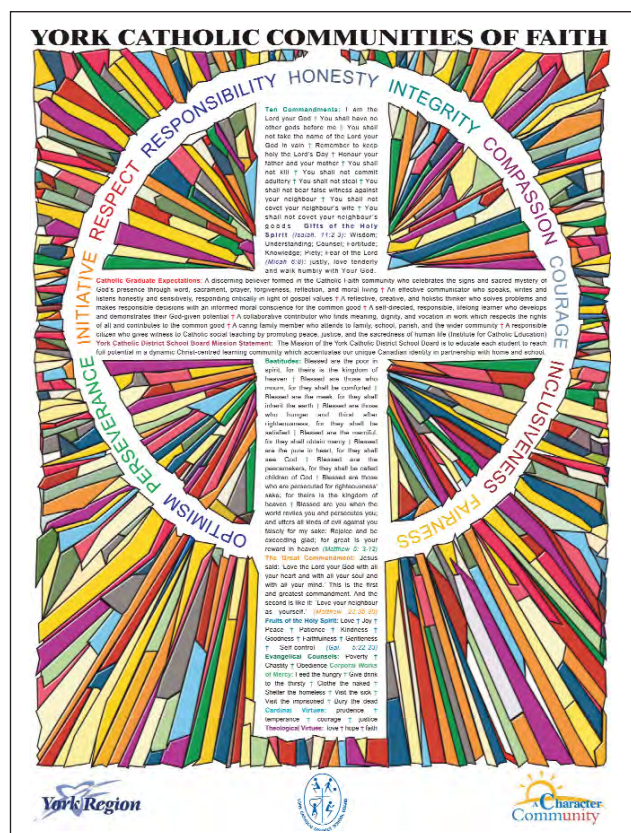
Background

The York Catholic District School Board created posters to make the links between character development and Catholic traditions and teachings clear, as well as to show how the board sees its role within the Regional Municipality of York Character Community initiative.

What we did

The first poster is a visible sign of Catholic tradition and teachings and includes the cross as a central image. It also includes the Catholic School Graduate Expectations and the York Catholic District School Board's mission statement.

The second poster intricately links Catholic School Graduate Expectations and Catholic virtues to the character traits.



Impact

On school and system culture

- Creates a positive climate and establishes positive expectations through the linking of signs of faith and the attributes of good character

Parent and community engagement

- Creates parental and community awareness of the connectedness of what we teach and our beliefs

The Attribute

Board: *York Region District School Board*

Focus: *Global*

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Background

The Attribute is a character-based, electronic newsletter committed to providing a Canadian voice for character development by connecting the learning community locally and globally through resources, best practice and professional development. Although *The Attribute* is distributed by the York Region District School Board, efforts have been made to make it a national newsletter by including reports on character development events and discussions that are occurring throughout the country.

What we did

Every issue of *The Attribute* includes:

- Commentaries
- Celebration of school-based character development practices
- Promising practices
- Professional development opportunities
- Current research
- Resources
- Character community links
- Up-coming events
- Archives (text, audio, and video)
- Keyword search engine for easy access to archived issues

- Quotations
- Links to character education organizations throughout North America

The Attribute also receives and publishes contributions from its readers who see it as a forum in which to express their viewpoints in the dialogue on character development.

Those wishing a free subscription to *The Attribute* can visit www.theattribute.ca and follow the instructions posted under “Subscribe” in the top right hand corner of the newsletter. Subscribers receive an automatic email alert each time a new issue is released. Archives are also available.

Communicating with Empathy: Two Quick Tips

1. As you read and write, LISTEN. Listen with all of you – your heart as well as your mind. Listen for more than just words; listen for assumptions, context and emotions as well. More information is available than words can communicate.
2. Be positive. Encourage the positive. Check yourself for critical thoughts before they become critical comments. Voice any concerns constructively.

Impact

On system culture

- *Creates a forum for exploring character development*
- *Fosters understanding and a common language*
- *Creates a conduit for the flow of information regarding character development events and resources*

The Ministry recognizes that school and board partnerships with individuals and with community services groups and organizations, government agencies and businesses are essential to the creation of a strong education community. The successful practices described in this document are the products of a range of local and board relationships and affiliations; however, the Ministry does not endorse any specific group, organization, agency or business.

Le Ministère reconnaît que les partenariats des écoles et des conseils avec les individus, les groupes de services communautaires et les organisations, les organismes gouvernementaux ainsi que les entreprises jouent un rôle essentiel dans la création d'une communauté solide d'apprentissage. Les pratiques réussies décrites dans ce document découlent de divers liens au niveau local et au niveau du conseil. Cependant, veuillez noter que le Ministère n'appuie pas un groupe, une organisation, un organisme ou une entreprise en particulier.



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